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into system the numerous and disconnected parts of the organization, implied in such a work. We exhort them and their publishers to persevere, believing that a well conducted Annual Register will not only render an immediate and essential service to its readers in this country ; but that those portions of it, which relate to domestic affairs (the largest part in general of the work) will, by affording a better vehicle of information than elsewhere exists, discharge a very important office to the cause of free institutions, by conveying to foreign countries an accurate and detailed statement of their operation here.

ART X.—*Academies of Arts ; a Discourse delivered on Thursday, May 3, 1827, in the Chapel of Columbia College, before the National Academy of Design on its First Anniversary.* BY SAMUEL F. B. MORSE, President of the Academy. New York. G. & C. Carvill. 8vo, pp. 60. 1827.

WE hope the name which this Society has assumed, may be found hereafter more appropriate than it appears now. A *National* Academy may be understood to mean a public institution, founded and supported by the nation, or a private association of the first artists of a country. This Academy is of neither of these kinds. It is simply a society of artists in the city of New York, organized for the purposes of exhibition and instruction. As such it is a respectable and praiseworthy beginning ; and as we heartily wish success to such an undertaking, we regret the more that they have made so great a mistake in the selection of their name. To call themselves *National Academicians*, is making a claim of distinction which, we must say, is out of proportion to their merits. Nor do we think it is quite time for them to adopt the initials of their institution as a standing title. The N. A. would do very well in the catalogue of their own exhibitions, to distinguish the works of its members, but we find it affixed to their names in that of a private collection, given in a note to this discourse. This, though a trifle, seems to us very ill judged. The practice has been

tolerated only in Societies, which have established some reputation ; and even in those cases, it is a vanity of which their members begin to be ashamed. What would be thought if Mr Stuart should choose to call himself National Portrait Painter, or Mr Allston should take the style of National Historical Painter, and write accordingly after their names, N. P. P. and N. H. P. ? Yet they would but be claiming the rank which others yield to them ; while the name of National Academician is as inappropriate to some of those, who have dignified themselves with it, as it is injudicious in its application to the best.

It is unjust, moreover, to the reputation of the country. A foreigner could not be much blamed for judging of the state of the arts in America by the National Academy established in the first city of the Union. Nor could he be expected to examine very carefully by what right such a name is borne by this Society. Yet the Academicians could not be willing, that their works should be thought by strangers among the highest efforts of American art. They have given themselves a name, which means, in the common use of language, the great institution of the United States for the arts of design. What may happen hereafter in this particular, we pretend not to foretell ; but at present this new Academy comes somewhat short of deserving such a title.

Mr Morse's Discourse is short and appropriate to the occasion. It consists of a very brief sketch of the origin and constitution of the principal academies of arts in Europe, with remarks, chiefly contained in the notes, on the state and prospects of the arts in this country. We cannot agree with the author in all these remarks. Some of them seem tinged with a degree of dissatisfaction and jealousy, for which we think there is no occasion. He complains bitterly of the practice of buying old pictures, as tending to the neglect of living merit ; insists on the inexpediency of any but professed artists intermeddling with the government or direction of academies ; and deplores the hard fate of the American artist, who, after cultivating his art in foreign countries, returns to find his own so far behind him in taste, that he is doomed to starve in unmerited neglect.

This is all unreasonable and mischievous. We call upon facts to bear witness for us, when we say, that our artists suffer neither from the neglect nor the interference of others. Not

one of them, who could maintain any reputation in Europe (we mean well earned and tried reputation, and not that very precarious one of being a very promising young man), has lost it by a return to America. There is no undeserved preference for the works of old or foreign painters, and no want of patronage for those of our own. We do not pretend to know all the artists of the country, but we take such an interest in the arts, that we think we have heard of all the good ones; and, as far as our information extends, we say, that they have nothing to complain of. The source of the mistake and disappointment of others is this; our artists do but begin their education in Europe; they are sent there as soon as they discover the first symptoms of genius, and before it is well ascertained whether it is worth while for them to go. There they seem at first to be making prodigious advances (for in art, it is not the *premier* but the *dernier pas qui coute*), and, either from impatience or necessity, they hasten home to enjoy prematurely the fruits of their studies. In so doing they underrate the taste of the country, as it is natural enough they should, having left it before their own was formed. Besides, it is so much easier to learn to judge rightly than to paint well, that even with less opportunity, our judgment may at least have kept pace with the progress of their skill. A taste for the fine arts is but of recent, and has, therefore, been of very rapid growth among us. It is quite as likely, therefore, that the young artist, while learning his elements by a short stay in Europe, should fall behind, as surpass the taste of his countrymen; and it is equally natural, that if there be any interval of separation between them, he will consider himself most in advance.

But let him be assured, that his works are not tried here by a judgment formed only on what has been seen in America. That judgment is founded chiefly on the opinion of those, who have had opportunities of observation, at least as good as his own. The number of those, who have travelled in Europe to see and study the great works of art, has been rapidly increasing, and is now large. Our taste in these things is not of national origin. We have hitherto learned, and must long be content to learn, from older countries. A very few years, therefore, are sufficient to do away the difference between the taste of Europe and America. We have, in fact, made more progress in years, than other nations have in centuries, simply by adopting the fruits of their labors. It is very idle, then, for

any one to think, that by a few years' residence in Europe he can so get the start of us, that his merit cannot be understood here. It would be much more likely, that, led away by our admiration of foreign models, we should neglect the original beauties of the home-taught pupil of nature. We could give Mr Morse, in vindication of our taste, some illustrious examples among us, of those, who have labored long and patiently abroad, undazzled by their first success, and not content with the admiration of the ignorant, and who have not been disappointed or neglected on their return. Greater wealth, and more splendid distinctions, would have rewarded them in Europe, but nowhere could they have been more honored or valued than they are here. Nowhere could their works have been more eagerly sought at honorable prices. If these examples are too rare to encourage the desponding, let them at least believe, that in their profession, as well as in others, industry and perseverance will prevail; let them believe this, until they can find some examples of neglected merit to authorize their complaints. We have heard of starving and heart-broken genius in other countries, but there never was such a thing in this. The most liberal encouragement is offered to every hope of excellence, and that very liberality has, in many cases, by taking away the sting of necessity, destroyed the promise it would have fostered.

No artist can expect here the highest rewards of his art. He must seek them, if he is entitled to them, in the great capitals of Europe. We cannot make him a prince, or even a knight, nor endow him with 'personal nobility,' like those, whom Mr Morse mentions as examples of European munificence. But we can offer him all the country has to give; reputation, respect, and competency. If these will not satisfy him, he must take Mr Morse's advice, and not return. 'The American artist,' says he, 'may go abroad, but he must not return.' Before his foreign acquirements can be appreciated, he must go back to the point from which he started, take the public by the hand, and lead them on to the eminence he has attained. He may go abroad, and adorn other countries with his works, and the history of his own, with an imperishable name; but if he returns, it will be at the peril of his happiness and his life! Does any one believe this? Is there anything of fact that justifies it? We never heard of any who pined and died after this manner.

We should give a different advice to the young artist ; we should counsel him, if he has the means, to go and faithfully study his art where it is most successfully practised ; and not to be in haste to return for fear he should grow too wise to be understood. Let him not only study but practise in Europe. Merely drawing in an academy, and copying a few master-pieces, will not enable him to return with credit and success. Hundreds of students do these things, and do them well, who are never heard of as artists. He must labor long and hard, with the best means of improvement around him, if he hopes for distinction in his own country. And then he may return without fear of injustice. But one thing we repeat to him, and let him not forget it ; no attainments which are not sufficient to support and raise him into notice in Europe, will save him from neglect at home. The mere student of foreign academies will not at once be hailed as a master on his return. If he were, it would more clearly prove that deficiency of taste of which Mr Morse complains, than even the neglect of real merit.

Something in the same spirit, Mr Morse deprecates the intervention of any but professed artists in the management of academies. We doubt whether he is right in this. We are inclined to look on this exclusion, as one cause of those bad effects, which he admits to have proceeded from ill-constituted academies. It tends to the formation of a school ; which is little else than a system of errors and deviations from that imitation of general nature, which cannot be too exact even for ideal beauty ; there is but one nature, and there can be but one true way of painting. Artists may differ, indeed, in their choice of subjects and circumstances ; but independently of these, their peculiar manners are chiefly their peculiar defects. Yet it is exceedingly difficult, in the examination of nature, to overcome the prejudices of a favorite system of art. In the same scene, one painter will see nothing but light and shade, while to another it will seem full of color. Fuseli, no doubt, thought he was painting naturally, when he imitated humanity so abominably ; and his students, if they had been confined to his instructions, would have learned to see in nature the contortions and extravagances of their master's imagination. But the fact, that the defects of great masters are apt to mislead learners, is as obviously true in painting, as in everything else. And it can hardly be doubted, that, if academies exercise any

influence, those under the sole direction of artists will be more likely to sanction and perpetuate their errors, than those which admit in their government connoisseurs, who may be, at least, more impartial judges of nature than her professed imitators. But even if this be not so, the exclusion is impolitic. Artists cannot establish themselves in defiance of that portion of the public, best qualified to judge of their works; nor hold themselves entirely independent of those, who support their exhibitions, and buy their pictures. It is essential to their success, that they should inspire others with a love of their art, and diffuse as widely as possible the taste necessary to enjoy it. These associations are highly useful in this way, if they are freely opened to all who are desirous of promoting their objects. But if the direction of them is, by the jealousy of artists, confined to their own number, others will soon be weary of their share in establishments, where taxation and representation are so little united. Where a taste for the arts is already widely diffused, such a system may have some advantages, but where the taste is to be created, a more liberal course would be more expedient. In this, as in other particulars, the difference of the two countries seems to have been overlooked when the Royal Academy is proposed as the proper model of such institutions in America.

There could be no danger here of the other directors interfering improperly with the peculiar province of the artists, and they might often be useful as mediators or umpires between contending parties. They would be the defence of the meritorious against any of their brethren, who might otherwise pervert the power and influence of the academy to selfish or party purposes. That such differences and oppression may exist in these institutions, is well enough proved by their history, particularly by that of the same Royal Academy, whose example is thought to sanction this exclusive system. There has been but very lately a revolt in this institution, which withdrew much talent from its exhibitions. What has been the result, we do not know, but it may be presumed to have been unfortunate for the seceders, however just might have been their complaints. Such occurrences might often be prevented by the intervention of disinterested directors; and when they happen, they lead to consequences much worse, than an occasional deviation from correct taste, even if that were to be feared from the admission of such mediators.

Mr Morse supports this exclusion by the example of other professions. But in this he confounds associations for the mere regulation of practice, with institutions for the promotion and improvement of art. Besides, the fine arts are things that we can live without, while unhappily law and physic are necessary evils. The arts, to flourish, or even to exist, must be made agreeable to others besides artists. Others must be taught to love and to judge of them, before they will afford a subsistence to those, who practise them ; whereas, it requires no combination between doctor and patient to induce the latter to be sick ; nor do clients quarrel and go to law because they love to hear the eloquence of their advocates. If the infirmities of mind and body, which support these two learned professions, needed encouragement by the establishment of academies for their developement, no doubt the practitioners would be too liberal to engross to themselves all their advantages. The clerical profession is a more analogous case ; for its necessity, though great, is of a moral nature ; and the clergy have always, where their power and influence were not secured by the strong arm of authority, called into their associations the pious and sober-minded of the laity.

As to the purchase of old paintings, which is another subject of long and vehement complaint in the Notes to this ' Discourse,' we must again differ from the author. ' No disease,' he says, ' has infected infant art so inveterate, and so retarding to the progress of taste, as this.' Many quotations are added to show the little chance there is of any genuine old pictures being procured now, and the bad effects of collecting them, even if they could be obtained. Mr Morse does indeed, among his censures, introduce this cautious salvo ; that he ' would not by any means altogether condemn the collecting of pictures by the old masters ;' but he clearly thinks it much better to employ living artists, and even without much regard to their merit. To this effect he cites twice with great applause, from Opie's ' Lectures,' one of the grossest absurdities that ever were uttered, namely, ' that he who employs the humblest artist in the humblest way of his art, contributes more to the advancement of national genius, than he who imports a thousand *chefs-d'œuvres*, the produce of a foreign land.' ' The correctness of this assertion,' adds Mr Morse, ' is abundantly proved by the practice of those noblemen and others, who stand first among the encouragers of art in England.' The examples

given of this practice, are the purchase by three noblemen of Allston's *Uriel* and *Jacob's Dream*, and of Leslie's *Saul and the Witch of Endor*; which, instead of being humble works of humble artists, are, two of them at least, among the finest pictures of modern times, and by artists who stand at the very head of their profession. When such pictures are neglected, because they are not old, or foreign, Mr Morse may well be indignant; but it is a very different question, whether it is expedient to buy the works of our own artists, simply because they are so. If good American paintings were left unsold, because others of less merit were bought, or for any other cause, we would join heartily in censuring such illiberality. But the fact is not so. The real want in America is not so much of good patrons, as of good painters; and we doubt very much whether Mr Morse could tell us of a single good, not comparatively but absolutely good artist in the country, who does not, or might not by industry, receive a compensation for his labors in full proportion to that gained by other professions. We know of no good pictures left unsold. And if it is supposed, that we ought here to be content with a less degree of merit, and buy pictures which could not be sold elsewhere, we think it is a great mistake. Why should we do so? It would improve neither the taste of the public, nor the skill of the artists, but degrade the one, and retard the other. To spend money in 'employing the humblest artist in the humblest way of his art,' is encouraging national genius, just as much as paying an honest pains-taking tinker for spoiling his work, is encouraging national ingenuity. If the artists could do better elsewhere, they would not stay here for the pleasure of complaining; if they could not, they have no cause to complain.

As to the genuineness of the imported pictures, we should not differ much from Mr Morse in his final results, though we think they depend but very slightly upon his long and grievous preamble of frauds and impostures. For he admits, after all, that there are many good pictures of old masters in the country, obtained in Europe from genuine sources, and that a fine picture still finds its way occasionally across the water, and is added to the collections of professed dealers. This is the true state of the case, and we put as little faith as he does in the undoubted originals, which are sent here by hundreds to be sold by auction. But Mr Morse writes on this subject under a great excitement, of which he has not very well examin-

ed the causes. When he speaks in person, indeed, it is chiefly of his apprehensions of what may happen ; but we think his fears are quite unfounded. Let him look at the horrible lamentations and prophesyings of Barry, Opie, Shee, and Hoare, which he has quoted, and then consider that, so far from having become the receptacle of trash and counterfeits, England is hardly surpassed by any country in her treasures of ancient art. We are not much alarmed by the stories told in the notes of Mr Astley, and the ‘ officer of more wealth than judgment, that paid a fortune to a London dealer for a gallery of the works of the most reputed masters ;’ nor do we in the least believe the episode, contained in the same extract, of a starving English painter, who was taken up by a modern-antique factory at Amsterdam, and accidentally found by them to be such a genius, that they were obliged to seek inferior artists to paint Teniers and Wouvermans, while he was employed on pictures in his own manner, to be kept on hand for a future period. Such wholesale imposture cannot be carried on here ; and as to the little misnomers that actually take place, they are not of consequence enough to make it worth while for any one to disturb his own tranquillity, or the innocent complacency of the purchasers.

The course of this business in our own city has been this. We have, in the first place, a few small collections of good, and, we believe, genuine, old paintings. Many of these were procured in Europe at a time, when such acquisitions were more easy than they are now. A few years ago we had two or three importations, and among them some good pictures (whether originals or not is of less consequence), which were bought at prices, probably not greater than they were intrinsically worth. The modern English paintings sold about as well as those which were called old. Both kinds were bought because they were thought good, without any great regard to their names. Perhaps there were some mistakes made in that particular ; but not more than there would have been in buying as many works of our own artists. Since that time, there has been a flood of trash sent here for sale, too miserable to deceive any one ; and it has been sold for prices as miserable, or carried away to a better market. All this time the works of our own artists have been taken up at their fair value ; while, on the other hand, several fine old paintings, well authenticated as the works of masters, have, for want of pur-

chasers here, been sent to England for sale. We know of but one native production of great merit being lost to the country, because its value was not understood. The loss of these really fine pictures we regret, more than we should, that a whole generation of half-taught pretenders should be starved into some more useful employment.

Some of our remarks may seem harsh, but we make them from a sincere love of the arts. We would by no means be illiberal to our own artists, who give any promise of excellence; but there is no propriety in encouraging them in false taste or mediocrity. We would hold high the standard of taste; as high as it is in any place. We would not have the arts degraded even in favor of the artists. And so far are we from approving of anything, which is said to discourage the importation of old and foreign paintings, that we wish still greater facilities were afforded for it. If the old masters were, as we believe, better than the painters of our day, their works should be the models on which to form the public taste; and we would have as many of them as possible. And the same may be said of the modern paintings of foreign countries, so far as they are better than our own. We are not prepared to see the American system, as it is called, extended to literature or the arts. It would be the worst possible policy for the artists. Painting and sculpture are not among the necessities of life. Much as they improve and adorn society, a taste for them is not even the necessary accompaniment of a high degree of civilization. That from the earliest recorded time, and in almost every nation, rude or refined, it should have been the occupation of a portion of the community to imitate the forms and colors of nature, shows some native propensity in the human mind favorable to the cultivation of these arts. But whether they shall flourish or decay by the intellectual and moral improvement of society, depends, as far as we know, on no fixed law of our nature. They are powerful means of such improvement, and not the necessary consequences of it. A taste for them must not be expected to grow without care and cultivation. And undoubtedly the best means of promoting such a taste, is the exhibition of those works, which show of how much these arts are capable. The better the specimens we see of what has been done, the more desirous we shall be to encourage their progress; and the greater interest we shall feel in the labors of our own artists.

The love of the arts is, moreover, greatly dependent on remote associations. No man can be thoroughly imbued with it, in our times, who has not seen the wonders they have wrought in times past. For ourselves, at least, we confess, that we should feel comparatively little enthusiasm for sculpture and painting, if we had seen none but their modern productions. They would lose much of the poetical influence which they exert over our minds. We attribute this, not so much to their inferiority in modern times, as to their associations with the history of the past. All painting and sculpture remind us, in some way, of those older works of which we can never think without delight. If Claude, Salvator, and Poussin were forgotten, landscape painting would be much degraded from the high place it now holds; and even historical composition owes much of its elevation to similar associations. Still more do sculpture, necessarily so simple in its forms and uniform in color, and architecture, the principles of which seem so little founded on nature, depend for their interest on the wonderful works, that have come down to us from a yet more remote period.

Without these secondary attractions, we fear that the fine arts would languish and die in these busy and practical days. We have lost many of those sources of excitement, which produced the masterpieces we admire and imitate. Nothing but the contests of the arena could have called out such counterparts of nature as the Fighting and Dying Gladiators, or clothed in such perfect human forms the ideal beauty of the Apollo and Antinous. It was not merely the opportunity of seeing the naked figure in all its variety of action; though that enabled the ancients, ignorant as they probably were of anatomy, to attain in their statues a correctness, which all the science of the moderns has failed to reach; but it was their perfect enthusiasm for athletic exercises, and for the full development of the physical powers, which made their sculpture the wonder and despair of succeeding ages. So to the enthusiasm of a pompous religion, which no longer exercises its dominion over the imagination, we owe the masterpieces of historical composition in painting. Inanimate nature is still unchanged; and therefore landscape painting has failed less than any other, except portrait, which is the natural growth of busy and selfish society. But even landscape painting requires for

its perfection, like descriptive poetry, a secluded and contemplative life, which becomes every day more rare and difficult.

We cannot, therefore, join Mr Morse in his confident anticipations of the triumph of American artists over the most transcendent efforts of European genius, ancient or modern. That our country will equal the contemporaneous works of others, we are well inclined to believe ; though we cannot but see, in our peculiar situation, peculiar disadvantages. But we can hardly hope that the masterpieces of ancient art are ever to be surpassed here or in Europe. The forms and occupations of society, are growing every day less favorable to the highest efforts of the imagination. We live in an age of utility. Everything which tends directly to improve the physical condition of man, and develop his reasoning and active powers, is cultivated with zeal and success. The most stubborn obstacles of nature are yielding to new and tremendous enginery. What were her impassable barriers, have become highways ; and the fabled works of the giants are surpassed by the power of knowledge. Education is sent abroad into all classes of men, to make them feel their strength and use their reason. All this renders the world populous, prosperous, and happy ; but it is at the expense of much that we love, and much that elevates and refines the feelings. In this cultivation of the reason, the imagination loses its power. Eloquence, poetry, painting, and sculpture, do not belong to such an age ; they are already declining, and they must give way before the progress of popular education, science, and the useful arts. It may be, that when the great work about which the world is now occupied, is accomplished, a new school of art of proportionate grandeur, may arise ; but we fear that its best days are past. We cannot but rejoice at this progress of society ; still we must wish, that the good it brings might be purchased without so great a sacrifice. We would not withhold the light of knowledge, for fear it should dissipate the most poetical phantoms of the imagination ; but we may be allowed to look back on their old haunts, laid open to the vulgar day, with some feelings of regret.

This influence of the age may be doubted, because the disposition to encourage the arts seems still to remain unimpaired in the public. But its earliest effects must not be looked for there ; the mind of the artist is its first victim. It chills his enthusiasm, and discourages him from attempting, what per-

haps he might still perform. He works under the fear of a cold-blooded judgment, which represses that confidence, without which genius cannot work its wonders. To what else can it be attributed, that the princely prices which the works of the old schools still command, have not brought into competition with them modern productions of equal merit? When sums are paid for single and small pictures, which would be an independence to an artist, why is there not in all Europe, nay, why has there not been for more than a hundred years past, a single one whom we can place on a level with the old masters? The decay of eloquence is, perhaps, an even more striking example. Argument is almost all the oratory of our times. Premeditated appeals to feeling and passion have lost their power. Even the most popular assemblies must be convinced before they can be moved. We have grown cautious and suspicious, and are apt to distrust the orator, when he would win us to his side by any exhibition of emotion. We take pride in subduing our feelings to our reason. Every public speaker must feel this, and the consequence is, that our best public speaking is but a cold sort of argumentation. Accidental opportunities for great excitement still occur, but no one can now rely for success on the susceptibility of his audience. It is the same with poetry; it has almost ceased to be produced, and its popularity has sensibly declined, even in our short day. The last that has held any dominion over the public mind, owed much of its interest to the personal character of its author, with which all his works were colored. The practical and historical details of the Scotch novels have already eclipsed it.

There are, however, other causes, which have had their influence in degrading modern art. While the whole *costume* of the actual world has become less adapted to the arts, dramatic acting has been carried almost to perfection. The stage has been made so fascinating by its wonderful exhibitions of talent, that artists have either voluntarily chosen their models from it, or have by habit insensibly lost the power of distinguishing between true nature and these brilliant imitations. This effect is less observable here and in England, than in France and Italy, where it has sunk the art of painting into a gaudy puerility and affectation, of which we hardly know how to express our contempt. This cause has probably operated in fact less on English art, because the people are not so much attached and habituated to the theatre, as the French. But the English schools

of tragedy and acting, seem to us so much more natural than the French, that the fault is not so striking there, when it exists. That it is a fatal fault, is obvious ; for it is copying a caricature instead of the original. Even the best acting can never be a true transcript of nature. The character and sentiments of the drama are poetical and exaggerated. It is in that, as in painting, necessary to color beyond nature to resemble her ; and when that exaggerated copy is made the model for another, the departure from the original becomes too wide for the imagination to reconcile. It has been said, that the whole business of French society is *représenter* ; it is the same with their historical painting ; they aim to show, not how their characters would look and act, but how they should be *représentés*. That the Italians, surrounded by the masterpieces of the arts, which their own country has produced, should have followed in the same course, shows how difficult it is to resist the influence of the actual state of society ; and that it degrades the mind of the artist, long before it quite corrupts the public taste, is proved by the fact, that the old Italian school is as much as ever admired, even in those countries where modern art is in the most deplorable state of degeneracy.

If these views are correct, there is more in them to stimulate than to discourage artists. They exhibit no insurmountable obstacles to their progress. The peculiar difficulties that beset them, are in themselves, and therefore within their control. They live in an age unpropitious to the developement of that high enthusiasm, which produces the greatest works of art, but, nevertheless, ‘the fault is not in their stars, but in themselves, if they are underlings.’ Great minds may resist even the pressure of the age ; nay, to resist it, requires only a steady pursuit of acknowledged principles. If the artist will not be seduced by examples, which he cannot approve ; if he will disregard the fashion of the day and the practice of his contemporaries ; if he will confine himself to his profession, and so avoid the seductions of society, which would lead him away from the contemplation of nature, he may still redeem the reputation of his age and country, and place himself on as high an eminence, as he could have reached, if he had lived in the most favorable period. That this can be done, we think is about to be shown ; as much talent and enthusiasm as can be brought to the work have now been employed, in our own community, in one noble effort, for years of patient and persevering labor.

That it should fail is impossible ; but how much can be effected by such appliances in these degenerate days, is a question of deep interest to all among us who love the arts. We pretend not to guess how far this work is to rival those, which have been so long the standards of excellence ; but of all the productions of art in the present age, we have no fear in predicting, that the greatest is behind and not far off.

The subject on which our artists most need to be admonished, is the cultivation of the mind. Their great deficiency is a want of vigorous and poetical conception. The mechanical process of drawing and coloring is often well done, but the mind seems not to contribute its share to the work. It is owing to this, that so many have failed to redeem the promise of their youth. From the number who have made good beginnings without instruction, it has been thought, that there was a peculiar talent for the arts in the Americans ; but most of these were but examples of that mechanical ingenuity, which certainly is a general characteristic of the people. It may be difficult to convince the artist of this deficiency of mind ; but let him place a landscape, for example, of almost any of the living painters by the side of one, of the old masters. He may find the drawing, coloring, and perspective as good, and perhaps better ; but the difference between them is, that one is the work of the hand only, the other of the imagination ; one shows, perhaps even with less skill in the execution, and often in spite of injury and decay, a fine creation of the mind ; the other is a dull copy of what happened to be before the artist, or a composition of commonplace and unmeaning objects. The parts of one seem selected to fill the canvass with picturesque forms and colors, those of the other chosen for the ideas and feelings they are adapted to convey. The difference is like that between poetry, and mere musical verse.

It is natural that as excellence in composition declines, it should be replaced by mere ingenuity ; but the attention that is now paid to execution in painting, seems to us to have acted also as a cause in degrading the art. Success in that is comparatively so easy, and satisfies so many minds, that the attention of the artist is drawn from the more laborious task of invention. The common course of study too, gives an undue importance to mere skill of hand. It is all that can be taught by a master, and those who study under distinguished artists, are apt to be content with what they learn of them. This is one bad

effect, which we may attribute to all academies. They can but teach the form and manner of the art, and they attach so much importance to them, and reward excellence in them with so much distinction, that the student forgets there is anything else to be acquired. The facilities for such acquisitions have become very great, but these will not make an artist. The fine arts are works of the imagination, and the skill of the hand and the eye, is but the means of communicating to others, those thoughts and feelings, which distinguish the artist from the artisan. The mere picture-maker is not above any other nice workman. Even in branches of the art which seem hardly to admit of much invention or exercise of mind, their power is still enough to make all the difference between good and bad. No uncultivated man, whatever be his manual dexterity, can paint a good portrait, or even make a good likeness. The mind of the artist shines out even through his copy of another's features.

Great artists have sometimes begun their labors without intellectual cultivation, but they have never produced their great works until they had overcome the disadvantage. Their paintings were not the results of knack, or of mere practice, but of study, observation, and reflection. Claude began to paint late, without education, and in the lowest rank of life ; but we read afterwards of his habit of walking in the fields, not merely to observe, but to explain philosophically to his friends, the beautiful appearances of nature, which he has preserved in his landscapes. Leonardo passed months in studying his unfinished picture of the *Supper*, without touching it.

While we speak thus cautiously about the present claims of our artists, we would by no means be thought indifferent to their success. We should be sorry, if anything we have said should in the least abate the liberality of the public towards them. They must be supported and encouraged now, or we can expect no improvement from them. All we mean in the way of caution is, that this encouragement be governed by discretion ; and that it be understood as a stimulus to future efforts, and not the reward of present excellence. We have endeavored to repress what seems to us a repining disposition, founded on an overestimate of their actual claims ; but we would not be understood to say, that their rewards are beyond their merits. We have felt the more urged to the remarks we have made, because we thought that complaints like

those contained in this 'Discourse,' coming from an artist of so much reputation and merit as Mr Morse, at the head of an institution which must exert a considerable influence on those within its immediate neighborhood, might have, if uncontradicted, a most discouraging effect on the younger artists. And we confess, too, that, as part of the public, we feel aggrieved at what we consider the injustice as well as the inexpediency of some of the remarks. Even since we began this article, we have seen new proofs, that the American artist has no cause to complain of a want of patronage, in the liberal prices paid in Boston for several works of a favorite artist of Philadelphia immediately on their arrival. Still we would urge on the public the necessity of a liberal and untiring encouragement of the arts. They are eminently useful to the community. They are an ornament at home and an honor abroad. They elevate and refine the national character, and may even in turn protect the country that has fostered them. They have saved cities from fire and pillage, and given a character of sacredness to the countries that honored them. Greece owes to her ancient arts, more than to any other cause, her still cherished hopes of independence. The strength of her citadel lies more in its architecture, than in its fortifications; and her lost gods have done better for her, than her generals.

But we hope it is superfluous to reason about the usefulness of the fine arts. We all feel and acknowledge the importance of a literature of our own, and the good influence of the arts is no less certain. Their effect on the reputation of a country is extensive, because they speak a common language equally intelligible to all nations. And though much more circumscribed in their operation than letters, they act more immediately on the character of a people. Painting, sculpture, and architecture are addressed to the whole mass of society; and being presented directly to the senses, the ideas which they are capable of conveying, lose nothing of their power in the transmission; while written language, at the best, can but excite in the imagination prepared by education to receive it, emotions resembling those of the author. Literature operates on the few who seek its power, while the arts mingle their influences with the objects and pursuits of daily life.

But as sources of pleasure, which, instead of degrading, elevate the mind, they make large demands on our gratitude and care. They occupy, in this way, a place so necessary to

be filled, that the nation, which can exist without them, must be, as the philosopher said of the man of solitude, much above or much below the common standard of humanity.

ART. XI.—*Letters and Memoirs relating to the War of American Independence, and the Capture of the German Troops at Saratoga.* By MADAME DE RIEDESEL. Translated from the Original German. New York. G. & C. Carvill. 12mo. pp. 323.

THE custom of employing mercenary troops in warfare is as ancient, perhaps, as the history of civilization. It is recognised among the laws of nations, and justified on the ground, that it is lawful for any sovereign, in combating his enemies, to use such means as he can command, both by the physical strength and the wealth of his dominions. These two together constitute the actual measure of his power, to the full extent of which he may exercise his legitimate authority, and repel hostilities. On the side of the mercenary it is alleged, that he has a right to enlist in the service of any country he chooses, provided he does it not to the injury of his own government, and particularly if he has its consent; and since, what is lawful for one is lawful for all, any sovereign may aid another with mercenary forces, if the soldiers who compose them engage voluntarily in the service. No little casuistry has been exercised by writers in discussing these topics, but into this labyrinth we are not about to enter, nor shall we inquire how far usage is borne out by strict principles of justice, or even by a sound policy.

It is quite certain that the British ministry, at the beginning of the American revolution, had no scruples on the subject, and that in Parliament they strenuously defended the course they adopted. The military operations of 1775 in the Colonies had been less successful, than was anticipated, and it was resolved to send over an army the ensuing year, that should quell all disturbances and speedily put an end to the contest. It was proposed to augment this force to fifty-five thousand men, but no more than twenty-five thousand regular English troops could be spared for this purpose. To make up the deficiency, the